



State of Rhode Island
State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196
401-222-2080

Daniel J. McKee
Governor

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Room 35, Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 2021-House Bill 5951 – Relating to State Affairs and Government – Executive Office of Commerce

Dear Chairman Abney:

I write to offer my strong support of House Bill 5951, An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – Executive Office of Commerce, which creates a Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Housing within the Executive Office of Commerce. Rhode Island has a housing crisis – the ability to afford a home is a major challenge for Rhode Islanders. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, almost half the renters in our state were cost-burdened, and this issue is only exacerbated by a lack of housing production. Rhode Island lags behind peer states when it comes to investing in housing production. From 2005 to 2018, building permit activity dropped nearly 50% in Rhode Island, and of all the states in the northeast, Rhode Island is the only one without a dedicated annual revenue for housing production.

As Governor, this issue is a priority. That is why my proposed FY2022 budget dedicates \$6.7 million a year to housing production, creates a new housing incentives program for municipalities, and strengthens and modernizes housing governance in Rhode Island, including the creation of the Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Housing within the Executive Office of Commerce.

For these reasons, I strongly commend Speaker Shekarchi's House Bill 5951. This is an important piece of legislation that demonstrates the State's deep commitment to addressing and overcoming these barriers. The creation of this position will enhance the State's ability to coordinate across state government to develop affordable housing opportunities and strengthen communities.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. McKee
Governor

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Speaker Shekarchi
Danica A. Iacoi, Esq.